



Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

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Optimizing collection of footprint evidence from crime scenes and suspects. What the experts need

Paul Bennett

Queensland University of Technology, Podiatry, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Analysis of footwear recovered from a crime scene is a well known and well accepted part of forensic investigation. When footwear is obtained by investigating officers, comparative analysis maybe undertaken. This can be done either by the detectives or in some cases, podiatrists with experience in forensic analysis of footwear. Frequently asked questions of a forensic podiatrist include; "What additional information should be collected from a suspect (for the purposes of comparison), and how should it be collected"? This paper explores the answers to these and related questions based on 20 years of practical experience in the field of footwear analysis as it relates to podiatry and forensics. Elements of normal and abnormal foot function are explored and used to explain the high degree of variability in wear patterns produced by the interaction of the foot and footwear. Based on this understanding the potential for identifying unique features of the user and correlating this to footwear evidence becomes apparent.

Standard protocols adopted by forensic podiatrists allow for more precise, reliable, and valid results to be obtained from their analysis. Complex data sets are now being obtained by investigating officers and, in collaboration with the forensic podiatrist; higher quality conclusions are being achieved. This presentation details the results of investigations which have used standard protocols to collect and analysis footwear and suspects of major crime.